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Agenda item 119

PATTERN OF CONFERENCES

United States of America: draft resolution

Reduction of paperwork

General Assembly,

Having considered the information presented by the representative of the Secretary-General to the Fifth Committee in October 1995 on the costs and waste associated with the increasing volume of documentation,

Recognizing that Member States contribute directly to this volume of documentation through their requests for reports and that they can reduce the costs and waste associated with the production of United Nations documents through increased restraint in making such requests,

Recognizing also that the increase in the demand for and volume of documentation has had a negative effect on the quality and timeliness of reports,

Noting that Economic and Social Council decision 1995/222 of 5 May 1995, entitled "Documentation", requires Secretariat accountability regarding seriously tardy reports,

Noting also that some actions taken by the Committee on Conferences, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the First Committee of the General Assembly can result in lower documentation costs,

1. Decides:

(a) That documents originating in the Secretariat for submission to the General Assembly or its subsidiary bodies should not exceed sixteen pages in length, except when the Secretary-General certifies that a document represents a

special case warranting reporting at greater length, such as a non-recurrent comprehensive report on an issue not routinely addressed, and that the production of addenda to documents should be strictly limited to that which is requested in the legislative mandate;

(b) That documents originating in the General Assembly or its subsidiary bodies should not exceed twenty-four pages in length, except when the Secretary-General certifies that a document represents a special case warranting reporting at greater length, such as a non-recurrent comprehensive report on an issue not routinely addressed, and that the production of addenda to documents should be strictly limited to that which is requested in the legislative mandate;

(c) That reports should not include descriptions of the history of the subject that are contained in other documents, but rather make reference to those other documents, and should not include a narrative of substantive discussions;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to ensure that documentation is available in accordance with the six-week rule for the distribution of documents, in each of the six official languages of the United Nations;

3. Decides that, should a report normally bound by the six-week rule be issued shortly before or on the same day that the relevant item or segment is to be considered, the officer responsible for the introduction of the report should be accountable to that intergovernmental session, that is, should give the reasons for the delay;

4. Requests the President of the General Assembly:

(a) To ask all the Chairmen of the Main Committees of the Assembly to encourage all members to exercise restraint in making proposals containing requests for new reports and to consider biennializing or triennializing resolutions that require production of reports;

(b) To encourage all Main Committees to become aware of changes instituted in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the Committee on Conferences and the First Committee of the Assembly with regard to reducing documentation costs;

5. Requests the Secretary-General:

(a) To present oral rather than written reports where appropriate, in particular in the case of progress reports and procedural and organizational issues;

(b) To submit consolidated reports on related topics under a single item or sub-item where appropriate and cost-effective;

(c) To provide an oral estimate of the cost of any document or report requested by Member States when an intergovernmental body adopts a resolution containing such a request;

(d) To seek a more reader-friendly and uniform format of reports similar to that used in the preparation of the fascicles of the report from the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the reports for the sessions of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme;

6. Also requests the Secretary-General to take steps to promote expanded use by Member States of optical disk equipment in order to reduce copying and distribution costs;

7. Endorses the recommendation made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that the Joint Inspection Unit conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the publications activity of organizations of the United Nations system, including, inter alia, an analysis of the extent to which publications are used by Member States and the cost-effectiveness with which publications are produced;

8. Requests the Secretary-General to present to it at its fifty-first session an oral report on the savings resulting from these measures.